

still at least a chance the House might conclude that we have done a terrific piece of work, and they could very well consider the option, as the Blue Dogs have suggested, of taking up the measure and sending it on down to the President for signature.

So for the moment, Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMEMORATING THE 99TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NAACP

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, 99 years ago today, a group of courageous individuals came together to form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

The year of 1909 was the centennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth. Fewer than 50 years removed from the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and the carnage of the Civil War, the promise and price of that struggle must have still been fresh on the minds of many Americans.

The "Call for the Lincoln Emancipation Conference in 1909" was designed to take stock of the progress since the end of the Civil War.

The conclusion of the 60 organizers, among them the mayor of Toledo, and the president of Western Reserve University in Cleveland, the conclusion was that Lincoln would have been disheartened by the Nation's failure to secure equality of law and equality of opportunity without respect to color. They faced rampant Jim Crow discrimination, conducted with the blessing of the Supreme Court. The country was plagued by race riots and lynchings in every region, even in Lincoln's hometown of Springfield, IL.

The founders of the NAACP understood that if true equality was to be had, the spirit of the abolitionists must be revived. So long as the North remained silent about the conditions in the South, it was supplying tacit approval.

They wrote:

Discrimination once permitted cannot be bridled. Recent history shows that in forging chains for the Negroes, the white voters are forging chains for themselves.

They met, they organized, and they spoke out. For almost a century the NAACP has led the fight for equality, continually working to ensure political and educational and social and economic equality for persons of all races.

Whether it was the fight to desegregate public schools or to secure equal voting rights or the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the NAACP has remained at the forefront of the struggle for justice. Even when this body, this Senate, did not do the right thing, the NAACP continued to fight for equal rights and equal opportunity.

This is a struggle that continues today. Discrimination in housing has continued a legacy of segregation in many of our neighborhoods and many of our schools. Discrimination in housing finance has led to disproportionate numbers of African-American and Latino borrowers being stuck with predatory loans that are falling into foreclosure at record rates.

Black young people are more likely than their peers to attend failing schools. A new wave of barriers to voting rights has appeared in the form of vote caging, deceptive practices, and unreasonable voter ID laws. I saw some of those in the 1980s as Ohio Secretary of State. They happened in New Jersey, they happened in Louisiana, they happened in the North, they happened in the South. They are still happening.

African Americans make up about 13 percent of our population but account for over 50 percent of the prison population.

In times such as these, the NAACP is needed more than ever. Fortunately, in my home State of Ohio and across the Nation, NAACP chapters continue their fight for justice and equality. In Lorain, in Mansfield, in Toledo, in Cleveland and Columbus, they continue that fight.

The Ohio NAACP Prison Program is changing the lives and helping to rehabilitate hundreds of inmates. NAACP members across the State are registering voters and run afterschool programs.

The Cincinnati NAACP chapter is holding public forums to foster a better relationship between the community and the police department. Through programs such as these, our communities are stronger, our neighborhoods are stronger, our Nation is stronger.

As a life member of the NAACP, I am proud to support its efforts to protect our rights to increase opportunities for all Americans. As the founders observed 99 years ago, this Government cannot exist half slave and half free any better today than it could in 1861. I hope my colleagues will join me today in commemorating the NAACP's 99th anniversary.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ.) The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

199TH ANNIVERSARY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S BIRTH

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in her book "Team of Rivals," Doris Kearns Goodwin tells a story that illustrates the extraordinary, transcendent power of Abraham Lincoln's faith in human freedom and democracy.

It is a story about something that occurred in 1908, 100 years ago. The Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy had been entertaining some Caucasus tribesmen for hours with tales of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Napoleon. When he finished, a chief stood and asked Tolstoy to speak about the greatest of all heroes, a man who "spoke with a voice of thunder . . . laughed like a sunrise and his deeds were as strong as the rock." Tell them, the chief implored, about Abraham Lincoln.

Tolstoy would later write, "That little incident proves how largely the name of Lincoln is worshipped throughout the world. . . . He was not a great general like Washington or Napoleon; he was not such a skillful statesman as Gladstone or Frederick the Great, but his supremacy expresses itself altogether in his peculiar moral power and in the greatness of his character. "Washington was a typical American. Napoleon was a typical Frenchman. But Lincoln," Tolstoy wrote, "was a humanitarian as broad as the world."

Today marks the 199th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. This past weekend was also the official opening of a 2-year bicentennial celebration of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial. In Harlan County, KY, where Lincoln was born in bitter poverty, Lincoln scholars and admirers gathered to discuss and celebrate Lincoln's life and legacy. This evening in Springfield, IL, the Abraham Lincoln Association will hold its annual meeting to once again reflect on the life of Abraham Lincoln in his hometown.

I express my personal thanks to Judge Tommy Turner who has worked tirelessly with so many dedicated Kentuckians to put together today's kickoff in Harlan County.

First Lady Laura Bush was to have spoken at the kickoff. Unfortunately, the icy weather forced postponement. It will be rescheduled. She will be returning to the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site in Hodgenville, KY.

President Lincoln kept a place in his heart for Kentucky all his life, and there must be a special place for Kentucky in the Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration. I also thank my colleague, Senator Jim Bunning, who is a member of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. I know how hard he worked to make this kickoff a success in his home State.

Over the next 2 years, hundreds of special events and celebrations will be held in cities and towns across America to remind all of us who Lincoln was and what he meant and still means to

America and the world. Coordinating many of these events will be the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, which I am honored to cochair with Harold Holzer, a noted Lincoln scholar from New York, and my fellow Illinoisan, Representative Ray LaHood. Ray deserves special credit because it was his idea to create this commission to honor Illinois's favorite son in our land of Lincoln. For 12 years before I was elected to the Senate I had the privilege of holding the same seat Lincoln once held in the U.S. House of Representatives, a seat now held by Congressman LAHOOD.

Abraham Lincoln was, I believe, America's greatest President. Our Founders decreed that we are all endowed with an inalienable right to liberty, but they could not reconcile their noble ideals with the ignoble practice of slavery. Abraham Lincoln helped give meaning to our national creed of "liberty and justice for all." He steered America through the most profound moral crisis in our history and the bloodiest war. His leadership saved the Union, and his vision redefined what it meant to be an American.

The goal of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission is to help Americans and people around the world to gain a better understanding of this complex and heroic man. We want to foster a resolve among Americans from all backgrounds to continue the work Abraham Lincoln started. I think the Gettysburg Address may be the greatest speech I have ever read. I memorized it in grade school. I refer to it so many times, and realize, in an economy of words, Abraham Lincoln speaking almost impromptu really captured great meaning for so many Americans. He challenged all of us to rededicate our lives "to the unfinished work" for which "the brave men, living and dead" had sacrificed so much on the hallowed ground of battle in Gettysburg, PA.

How much of the work of true democracy remains unfinished today? How can we summon, as Lincoln said, "the better angels of our nature" to meet the challenges of our time? Those are the discussions the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission hopes to foster as America prepares to celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of its greatest President.

I encourage everyone to go to the Commission's Web site at www.lincolnbicentennial.com, learn more about Lincoln and about how your community can plan to celebrate his birthday. President Lincoln's adopted hometown of Springfield is also my adopted hometown. I have lived there almost 40 years now. If you have ever been there, you know that around every corner in downtown Springfield is another powerful reminder of Abe Lincoln. The small house at the corner of 8th and Jackson, the only home Lincoln ever owned, is just a block away from my Senate office. His law office, right near the old

State capitol, is an amazing place, restored and visited by so many because of its meaning in his daily life as an ordinary lawyer in central Illinois, the old State capitol building where he warned prophetically that a House divided could not stand. This beautiful building was restored in 1976 as part of our bicentennial. The old State capitol is one of my favorite in the State of Illinois.

My special thanks to a good friend of mine, an architect named Earl Wallace Henderson III, who was called on to do a magnificent job of restoring and remodeling that old State capitol. And now, just a couple blocks away, my pride and joy as an elected official from Springfield, IL, is the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. It is just 3 years old. It is already the most visited Presidential library in America. I love that place. I go to a lot of museums and Presidential museums. I don't know of another one, though, that really captures the spirit of the President so effectively and lures children in for beautiful exhibits and movies that they don't forget. Kids walk out of the Abraham Lincoln Museum with their moms and dads and say: Can we go back? It warms my heart every time I hear of the record numbers of people who are visiting.

It was also in Springfield that a 28-year-old Lincoln, a member of the State legislature, delivered a speech that still speaks powerfully to us today. We know it as the Lyceum Address. Lincoln was told to speak about whatever he liked. He chose as his subject "the perpetuation of our political institutions." He expressed a concern that would later be echoed many times: What would happen to America when its Founding Fathers and those who fought to gain our liberty were gone? How could we sustain America if new generations had no knew leaders to inspire them with original ideas of our Republic? Until then, the truth and terrible costs of America's revolution could always be seen—in Lincoln's words—"in the form of a husband, a father, a son or a brother. . . . A living history was to be found in every family . . . in the limbs mangled, [and] in the scars of wounds received. . . ."

Lincoln went on to say:

But those histories are gone. They were the pillars of liberty; and now that they have crumbled away, that temple must fall—unless we, their descendants, supply their place with other pillars.

I would like to think that Lincoln would be relieved if he could see this great Nation today. We are 170 years further removed from our Founders than we were when the young Lincoln spoke those words at the Lyceum, but America is still filled with patriots who know and are willing to defend our founding principles. There are many of us, and we are vastly more diverse than the Americans of Lincoln's time, but there is still in us a deep and passionate longing to be one nation, one people, undivided.

We saw a glimpse of that desire in the dark days after 9/11. Sometimes we wondered if we could ever recover that sense of national unity and purpose. But look what is happening today. There is a deep longing in America today to transcend old divisions in order to meet our new challenges. It is a longing that goes far beyond political parties and labels of all kinds. We have not forgotten the principles on which our Nation was founded, nor have we forgotten the lessons Abraham Lincoln taught us. Our unity is our strength. Together we can overcome any challenge. We can finish the unfinished work of America and become a "more perfect union."

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING CONGRESSMAN TOM LANTOS

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, California and the entire Nation lost a remarkable leader yesterday with the passing of my friend, Congressman TOM LANTOS.

From his leadership as chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs to his founding of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Congressman LANTOS went about his work with a dignity and a seriousness that transcended politics. In a time of bitter divisions, he earned the respect of colleagues from both sides of the aisle.

As a survivor of the Holocaust, Congressman LANTOS brought to Congress a profound personal commitment to human rights. We will remember not only his courage and his optimism, but also his deep affection for his adopted country. He leaves behind a legacy of hope and inspiration.

On a personal level, it was an honor to call TOM a colleague and a friend. I was proud to work with him on so many important issues.

I remember working with him to secure funding to build a tunnel to bypass a section of Route 1 that was so frequently closed by landslides that it was known as "Devil's Slide." It took years, but they broke ground on the tunnel in November. And it is a fitting tribute to the passion with which he served his constituents that there is a bill before the State senate to name that tunnel in his honor.

Congressman LANTOS was a true statesman, and we will miss him. My heart goes out to his family during this time of grief. They are in our thoughts and in our prayers.

APPROPRIATIONS EARMARKS

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, on October 23, 2007, Senator DEMINT and I